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The American Institute of Sacred Literature

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS OF BIBLE CLUBS USING THE OUTLINE COURSES

Students of the Social and Ethical Teaching of Jesus have considered his teaching concerning The Character of God as a Basis of Morality, The Highest Good, Sin and Punishment, Repentance, Forgiveness and Faith, as well as the sources for a study of the teaching of Jesus. Students of the Origin and Religious Teaching of the Old Testament Books have considered the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I, II Samuel, I, II Kings, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, chaps. i-xxxix. Helps for leaders of classes in these subjects have appeared each month since October in the BIBLICAL WORLD, THE CLUB LEADER'S EXCHANGE *under the direction of* GEORGIA LOUISE CHAMBERLIN, *Secretary of the Reading and Library Department of the* AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.

THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING OF JESUS[1]

In the discussion of the topic to be presented this month, Jesus' teaching concerning the brotherhood of man, we are at once thrown back to the primary principle of the fatherhood of God, and thus we shall study these two tenets of the Christian faith together. So little is this conception of the organization of human beings in relation to a divine father found in the Old Testament that it may truly be said to be the great spiritual discovery of Jesus. This discovery once made by the open mind of Jesus broke down to him all barriers between race and creed, and made possible for the first time a universal religion.

Many of the teachings of Jesus seem, upon comparison with the teachings of his predecessors, the prophets, to be but clearer and more practical statements of ethical truth which had been earlier revealed, and lost sight of by the people of Jesus' day. This most fundamental doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the consequent brotherhood of man was to Jesus the solution of the past history of his people, and the key to the future destiny of the human race. Whether at first grasping its full

[1] Course book from the American Institute of Sacred Literature, *The Social and Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, by Shailer Mathews. 50 cents. Postage 4 cents.

significance for the world or not, Jesus was early forced, by the hostility of the Jews to such an interpretation of God, into the broadest application of his principle to the whole world. To bring the class to see the revolutionary character of this principle will be a task worthy of the most careful study.

A program for the first meeting may be: (1) The character of sons of God naturally resulting from the character of the father, God. (2) Some modern examples of the organization of individuals into groups for the good of society as a whole: (*a*) The Christian church, (*b*) Christian associations, (*c*) The Salvation Army, (*d*) Social settlements, (*e*) Other organizations. (3) What brotherly service are labor organizations rendering to society that the church could not give? (4) The demands of our own community upon Christian brotherhood and the part which our own church may take in bringing about a better condition.

Question for discussion: Is Christianity ever likely to become universal?

The second meeting may lay special emphasis upon the life of Jesus as an exemplification of his own teaching concerning brotherhood through sonship under the following heads: (1) His life with his apostles. (2) His conduct upon social occasions. (3) His disregard of the local prejudices of his people. (4) His attitude toward non-Jews. (5) His frequent as well as final sacrifice of himself for the good of his cause. (6) His treatment of his enemies.

Question for discussion: Can a selfish man be religious?

REFERENCE READING

Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, chap. vi; Hyde, *Outlines of Social Theology*, chaps. i, ii, and ix; Mathews, *The Church and the Changing Order*, chap. iv; Mathews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, chaps. iii, viii, and ix; Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, chaps. ii and vii; Stevens, *The Teaching of Jesus*, chaps. vi and xi; Gilbert, *The Revelation of Jesus*, pp. 131–44; Hyde, *Jesus' Way*, chaps. vii and ix; Clarke, *The Ideal of Jesus*, chaps. vi and vii.

See also references under the study for December, "The Kingdom of God."

Articles under the following heads will be found in *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels:* "Father," "Fatherhood," "Son of God," "Son of Man," "Kingdom of Heaven," "Sermon on the Mount," "Samaria," "Samaritan"; in Hastings' one-volume *Dictionary of the Bible* articles on "Children of God," "Person of Christ," and in the four-volume edition articles on nearly all of the above topics.

THE ORIGIN AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS[2]

In the books contributing to the thought of this period we have portions of the work of four prophets, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habbakuk, and Jeremiah, as well as the remarkable recasting of the laws of the period as found in Deuteronomy. In order to avoid "scrappiness" in the classwork it seems best therefore to treat all of the books except Jeremiah in the first meeting, leaving the entire program of the second meeting for this great prophet.

A study of the historical chart, which is so essential at this time, will show us the long reign of Manasseh in which the Jehovah religion was seemingly at its lowest ebb, and yet out of which came the reaction of priests and prophets which resulted in bringing forward the codified laws of Deuteronomy, based on the revolutionary principle of one central sanctuary, the abolition of all others being deemed by the advocates of Jehovah essential to their purpose of securing purity of worship. Our chart shows us also the great Scythian invasion which brought terror to all the countries contiguous to Palestine, followed by the death of the too venturesome, but noble king, Josiah, and the fall of Nineveh, the ancient enemy of Israel, before the combined onslaught of Babylonia and Media. The prophets of this period will tell us of the vacillating policy of the Judean kings in their uncertainty as to whether alliance with Egypt or Babylonia would afford safety, an attitude resulting in the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the destruction of the city, and the deportation of the inhabitants. We have here fifty years, the blackest of Israel's history, and yet presenting prophets of Jehovah whose faith in the ultimate destiny of the Hebrew people did not waver, and whose conception of the ethical quality of the Hebrew God rose higher and higher. In this period also we are compelled to face, with the Hebrews, the problems of a transient quality in the prophetic messages, and to search for the permanent note. The failure at this time of Isaiah's theory of the inviolability of Jerusalem, which was Isaiah's inference from his conception of a holy God, an inference which to Jeremiah, who conceived God as equally holy, seemed impossible, is a case in point.

A program for the first meeting may be: (1) The Scythian invasion: (*a*) Historically considered, (*b*) As interpreted by Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah. (2) The Book of Deuteronomy: (*a*) Its possible authors,

[2] Course book from the American Institute of Sacred Literature, *The Origin and Religious Teaching of the Old Testament Books*, by Georgia Louise Chamberlin. 50 cents. Postage 4 cents.

(*b*) An analysis of its contents, (*c*) Its relation to previous law books. (3) The reformation of Josiah and its underlying principle of one God, one sanctuary, and one priesthood. (4) The fall of Nineveh and the reading of Nahum's triumphal ode.

Subject for discussion: How far were Israel's prophets right in interpreting historical events as the direct acts of Jehovah?

The second program, devoted chiefly to Jeremiah, may present: (1) A sketch of Jeremiah's life. (2) Jeremiah and the popular prophets of his day. (3) Analysis of Jeremiah's methods as a preacher. (4) Jeremiah's solution, in view of the imminent fall of Jerusalem, of the problem of Jehovah's promises. (5) The city of Jerusalem in the thought of Hebrew prophets from Amos to Jeremiah.

Subjects for discussion: (1) Suppose that the successive kings in Jerusalem had heeded Jeremiah's warning, would the fate of the city have been changed? (2) What saying of Jeremiah do you consider the greatest contribution to the idea of God as held by his predecessors?

REFERENCE READING

Kent, *History of the Hebrew People*, pp. 159–204; Smith, *Old Testament History*, pp. 254–300; Wade, *Old Testament History*, pp. 373–94 and chap. xiii; MacFadyen, *Introduction to the Old Testament Books*, pp. 140-61, 206–18; Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, pp. 232–60, 314–20; Batten, *The Hebrew Prophet*, pp. 239–65; Cornill, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 71–108; Chamberlin, *The Hebrew Prophets*, chap. xi; Cheyne, *Jeremiah, His Life and Times;* Driver, *The Book of Jeremiah;* Gillies, *Jeremiah, the Man and His Message.*

Articles may be found in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, both the one-volume and the four-volume editions, on the following topics: "Anathoth," "Nineveh," "Jerusalem," "Assyria and Babylonia," "Megiddo," "Scythians," "Deuteronomy," "High-place," "Amon," "Jehoahaz," "Jehoiakim," "Jehoiachin," "Zedekiah," "Josiah," "Manasseh," "Nebuchadrezzar," "Jeremiah," "Habakkuk," "Zephaniah," "Nahum."